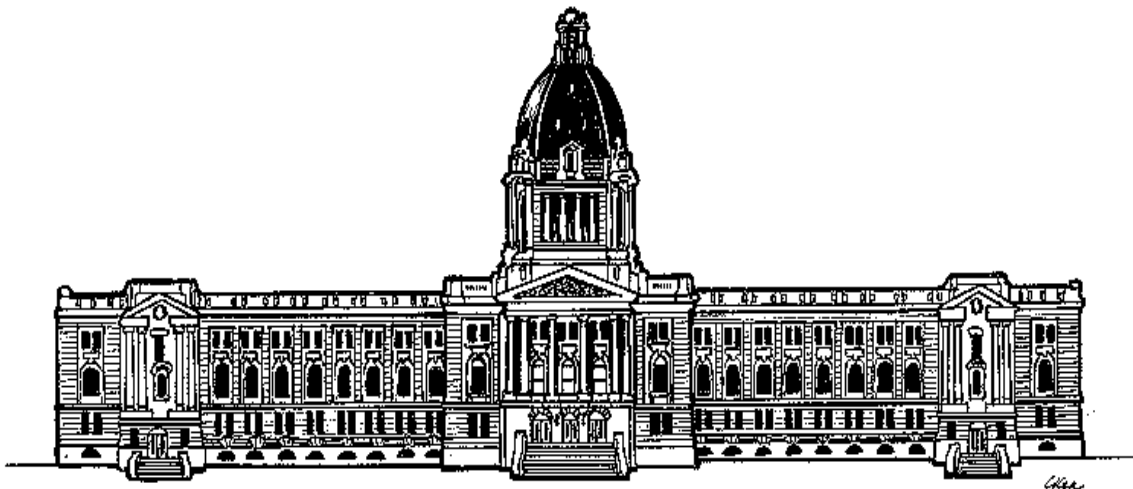




STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES
2005**

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Regina Rosemont

Mr. Glenn Hagel
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Ted Merriman
Saskatoon Northwest

Mr. Don Toth
Moosomin

[The committee met at 15:00.]

The Chair: — I call the committee to order. As outlined in the agenda, the estimates before the committee today are the estimates for Corrections and Public Safety, vote 73, and Justice, vote 3.

**General Revenue Fund
Corrections and Public Safety
Vote 73**

Subvote (CP01)

The Chair: — The first estimates for the committee to consider are the estimates for the Department of Corrections and Public Safety found on page 39 to 42 of the Estimates. The first subvote is central management and services (CP01).

And I'll recognize the minister, Hon. Mr. Prebble, and invite him to introduce his officials and if there's anything you'd wish to add as an opening statement at this time.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I had the privilege of making a fairly extensive statement before this committee last time I appeared, so I won't make an opening statement today. But I would like to introduce my officials.

With me today to my left is Terry Lang, who of course is deputy minister of Corrections and Public Safety. And to my right is Mae Boa, who's our executive director of management services. And seated behind me are Maureen Lloyd, who's the assistant deputy minister and has responsibility for adult corrections; Bob Kary, who's our executive director of the young offender's program in the department; Tom Young, and Tom is the executive director of protection and emergency services. Also with us today is Brian Krasiun, who's acting executive director of licensing and inspections; Duane McKay who's director of public safety and Sask911; and Karen Lautsch, who's executive assistant to Mr. Lang.

So, Madam Chair, we're very pleased to be back before the committee and would be very happy to try to answer any questions that members of the committee have about the budget estimates.

The Chair: — Thank you. And before we get to questions for members, I'll just remind the officials that if you do speak at the mike, please identify yourself for the ease of Hansard. And so the floor is open. Mr. Toth.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, to your officials, welcome. Mr. Minister, let me begin by just asking if your department has seen the global questions that we sent to the department — I believe they may have gone out recently — and how soon we can have a response. My apologies that we didn't get them off quicker.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — I can just say in response, Don, that we have received your questions and our officials are working on them. And we expect to be able to meet the May 10 deadline, which I think is the deadline for getting a response back to you. So we'll be pleased to meet that deadline.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And as I indicated, my apologies we didn't get them off sooner. With a change in staff, we just didn't get staff informed. And as you can appreciate, and, I think, having been on the other side, you know, with global questions, sending them across versus spending day after day just going through questions about, just general information about the department, we've found have been very worthwhile and saved some of the tying-up time of the committee. And so we appreciate and we look forward to the responses and where we may go from there, depending on the responses that we get to many of the questions.

Mr. Minister, over the years we have, and I'm sure your office has had complaints at different times within the department as to how services are provided. We're certainly aware of the correctional centre here in Regina, complaints about the facility and the aging of that facility, and in fact some of the problems that have transpired as a result of the well-being of that facility. And I note in this budget, there's some significant expenditures to upgrade part of the facility.

But one of the issues that comes up time and again is the question of how do personnel within correctional services or any of . . . personnel raising issues of concern that they come across, whether they work in correctional services or in the department, how do they deal with those issues? And what's the process that would normally be followed if a person has a complaint about workplace or work environment or personnel? Who would they approach, and what process is followed to deal with the concerns that are raised?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — First of all, Don, let me just say that there's \$3.9 million in this budget that is slotted specifically for the replacement of the 1913 portion of the Regina Correctional Centre. And I'm expecting that work, in terms of the completion of the facility, the target date is April 2008. There are more than 400 staff working in that facility and there's no question about the fact that the, I think the new centre is not only going to be good in terms of corrections practice in the province but it's also going to be a better working environment for staff.

Now I want to specifically answer your question about processes that are in place for staff to raise concerns and so I'm going to invite both the deputy minister, Terry Lang and the assistant deputy minister has responsibility for adult corrections, Maureen Lloyd, to describe for you the processes that are in place in the Regina Correctional Centre.

I'm assuming that that's kind of what you're focusing on. But if you want a broader description we can certainly provide that as well. But I'll just turn it over to Mr. Lang first, if I could.

Mr. Lang: — Thank you. Terry Lang. The processes that I'm describing would actually apply to all of our facilities. There's a number of different mechanisms that they would have.

I mean, we are under a collective agreement between the provincial government and the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union. And so, there's a fairly, there's a very well-defined grievance process that's outlined in the collective agreement. So that if an individual staff has a particular concern

or complaint, they can always file a grievance and then there's a process in place, you know, to sort that grievance out along the way.

But what we've been trying to do over the last number of years is working very hard with the union. We have joint union management committees and again that's something that's defined in the collective agreement, you'd find, across government. But trying to have very active discussions with our union shop stewards within the facilities.

They would have regular meetings to identify any particular concerns that have been identified to try and resolve as much as they can at the local level. If it can't be resolved at the local level, we have branch union-management committees and we also have a departmental union management committee to take on some of the bigger, the bigger issues that can't be resolved at the local level.

Mr. Toth: — I guess, Mr. Minister, when . . . We talk about the ability to address grievances that are brought to the attention under the collective bargaining agreement. But if individuals or employees feel that their grievances are falling on deaf ears, they don't seem to be arriving at a satisfactory response to the questions they've raised and they feel that maybe they're getting the cold shoulder and continuing to face issues in the workplace such as, for example, bullying or harassment, where do they go?

And does the department — and would your office — look at asking for an external investigation if need be to address these concerns to ensure that the concerns that were raised were indeed heard and were dealt with appropriately, and that anyone working in the department or working in a correctional centre could feel that their voice has been heard and their concerns have been addressed appropriately and they don't have to continue to feel that intimidation or harassment because they did complain about a workplace environment?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well first of all I think, I mean there's no question about the fact that in the Department of Corrections and Public Safety, particularly on the adult corrections side, there are, you know, there have been a significant number of grievances filed over the years, Don — higher than what you would find in other departments within government.

This is, you know, first of all this is not easy work. And secondly, to speak to your question about whether external advice is sought, sometimes external consultant advice can be quite helpful in terms of resolving the grievance process.

I'm going to invite Maureen Lloyd to comment specifically on grievance issues at the Regina Correctional Centre and to respond to the, you know, precise question that you've asked.

Ms. Lloyd: — Maureen Lloyd. In response to your question, I think there are two parts that you raise. One is the formal grievance process that's outlined in the collective bargaining agreement, and the other one is processes within the department to deal with issues that may be raised by staff in a variety of ways or at a variety of times.

And Mr. Lang mentioned we have a very active union

management process across all of our adult correctional facilities. Now within that process, it isn't a grievance process per se that happens within what we call the prison industrial operations committee. It is a process where many of these, the other issues that you talk about, are raised.

And the questions are asked about, so how, you know, how does a manager respond when someone in the correctional centre raises an issue? Lots of discussion, as we would direct people to say. One way that things are dealt with, issues are dealt with, are talking to supervisors — did you talk to your supervisor? Did you raise the issue? Did you, if you couldn't get an answer there, did you move up the line?

We talk with our facility directors in terms of an open door policy. Our directors are accessible to staff, if they have issues, to talk with them. That doesn't mean that all issues are resolved each time that they're raised. But we do facilitate a process where staff are able to communicate issues up the line and would come to my office if that's what would need to happen at the end of the day.

We also work with the Public Service Commission who is, in a sense, the employer — or is the employer. There are times we'd go to the Public Service Commission for advice if we have concerns raised by staff, or we are looking for advice in terms of how to handle issues. We also work closely with our human resource department of course. So there's a lot of different avenues that staff can go through to attempt to get issues resolved.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — I'm just going to ask Mr. Lang to make a supplementary comment in response to your question, too.

Mr. Lang: — Thank you. You specifically referred to bullying and harassment, and there is a specific process and a policy in place across government again to deal with harassment complaints. And that is much more of an external investigation that would occur. And staff are, you know . . . If they feel that they're in a situation where there has been harassment, they have an opportunity to file a formal complaint and that will be investigated. We also have expectations around all of our staff and all of our managers to, you know . . . It's not just if I'm experiencing harassment, but if I witness harassment I also have a responsibility to deal with it and raise it as well.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Mr. Lang, you mentioned about an external process. I take it then that if someone, if an individual feels that the concerns they raise haven't really been dealt with in a manner that they felt appropriate, exactly what process would they then follow to deal with that, in view of the external process you might follow? A letter to the minister? Or first of all to the department and then to the minister? What's the process?

Mr. Lang: — It's a letter that they would submit to the Public Service Commission and they would then determine whether it falls within the realm of the harassment policy. And there's some specific criteria that I'm certainly not able to quote today, but specific criteria. They'll say yes, it does fit within the realm of the harassment policy. Then there is . . . When I talk about external, I mean external to the workplace. So there is a number of trained harassment investigators throughout the province.

Some could work with government. Others would be external to government that they would simply assign to do the investigation, to determine whether harassment occurred, and then make some recommendations to the deputy minister in those situations.

Mr. Toth: — So then who determines whether or not a question of harassment moves up the chain if it isn't dealt with in a manner that the complainant might feel really addresses the question. You mentioned it goes, a letter, to the Public Service Commission, and then a body in that group looks to . . . [inaudible] . . . whether it should go further or just be dealt with at that level and not pursued beyond . . . proceed beyond that. But if the complainant feels that that really doesn't address the question, then how do they go beyond this letter of complaint if it isn't moved up the ladder?

Mr. Lang: — Well they would have, if they are an in-scope employee, they would, again, have the right to file a grievance. I mean, they can basically file a grievance on any particular issue. And then that follows a different process. It would be, at step one it's simply reviewed by the local manager to see if there's something that they can do to resolve it. If not, it goes up to, it's called step two, which our director of human resources would hear and gather further information, and make some other recommendations, if there is, you know, some new information that's come up. But ultimately if they want to pursue it, it could and would go to arbitration, which would be heard by, again, an outside arbitrator, who would have full decision-making power around whether or not some kind of harassment occurred.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, has your office had any complaints raised through the office in view of the fact that employees may have not felt their grievances were appropriately dealt with in the manner that's been explained?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well let me say this, first of all I'd want to go back and check with staff in terms of being certain that nothing . . . First of all, like I say, there's nothing that's come to my personal attention in the last few months, Mr. Toth. That's the first thing I should say.

Secondly, if it was . . . if there was a matter of serious harassment, I would expect it to be brought to my attention, if the request came to my office. But I do need to check with my ministerial staff to be certain that nothing of, you know, the nature of harassment has kind of come into the office and been addressed by them but perhaps not brought to my attention. So I do want to do a double check. But in the last six months, nothing has come to my attention by way of someone calling the office with a harassment complaint, that I've been made aware of.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, earlier on you had mentioned that there are . . . tend to be a number of grievances on an ongoing basis. What would be the average number of grievances that the department may have on an annual basis and how many would have been raised this year? Would it be higher or lower than the average, and how many grievances have been resolved?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — I'll give you the numbers for 2004.

There were 52 grievances that were, on the adult corrections side, that were received in 2004. And let me see if I can give you a total first off. There are . . . First of all, there are 239 outstanding grievances in Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety. And secondly, with respect to adult corrections as I was saying, there's 52 that have been received and 32 that are outstanding for the calendar . . . for the fiscal year 2004.

And on the young offenders programs, there have been 19 that were received in the year under review and 15 that were outstanding.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, when you talk about outstanding, I take it those are the number of complaints or grievances that haven't been what would be considered satisfactorily dealt with to this point? And normally, what would be the time period in dealing with a grievance? How long would an employee have and expect that the grievance they've raised would be dealt with appropriately?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — I think it's fair to say that your definition of what an outstanding grievance is, is accurate. And I'm going to ask Mr. Lang to speak to the question of the average length of time for resolution of a grievance.

Mr. Lang: — Yes. I'm not sure there's such a thing as an average length of time. I mean, many grievances are actually resolved at what we call the pre-grievance stage. So I mean, you know, a staff indicates a concern so we try and deal with it that way.

But formal grievances could take, could be resolved in a matter of days, or weeks, and some take years to resolve. And part of it is, I think we need to understand that it's a joint process. And so, it's not just the government's response, it's also the union's response. And so, in order for some of these cases to be moved forward to arbitration requires both parties moving at the same time. And sometimes, for different reasons, different parties take different times and so there are some grievances that have been outstanding for a number of years.

From our perspective though, I mean, the sooner we deal with them and, well the sooner we deal with them and resolve them, the better off we are so that we can get back to sort of the day-to-day business.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I think you mentioned 239 outstanding overall. How many years did that go back when you look at the overall outstanding?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — A few of these grievances go back a significant period of time, Mr. Toth. Yes. So I mean, there is no question about the fact that there's an unusually high number of outstanding grievances in the Department of Corrections and Public Safety. And you know, we've been working to try to reduce and bring resolution to some of these grievances, but we still have a lot of work to do.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, what areas would these grievances fall into? Would they be most workplace environment, employees having difficulty working with other employees, or concerns about the facility and the safety of the facility and the nature of the job? I wonder if you can give us an idea of some

of the grievances and the particular areas they would fall under.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — To give you a breakdown of the grievances between adult corrections and young offenders, there's 184 grievances that are found in adult corrections and 55 that are found in young offenders.

And I'll ask Maureen Lloyd to comment on the nature of the grievances on the adult correction side, and I'll ask Bob Kary to comment on some of the detail around the grievances on the young offender side.

I'll just see before we go to them whether my deputy has any further comments he wants to make on kind of the nature of the grievances.

Mr. Lang: — If I could just comment overall, I mean, again the type of grievances are a bit all over the map. I mean, they could be from very simple issues to more complex issues.

The majority of the ones . . . I mean, they all cross my desk at some point in time, and most of them deal with relating to their hours of work and calculation of pay. And again, because we operate institutions that operate, you know, 24 hours 7 days a week, the calculation of pay, shift differential, overtime often results in grievances because they can't be resolved at our local level. They require further interpretation through our payroll or through the Public Service Commission. And so that's why some of those grievances end up becoming grievances because that's the only way to actually resolve them. But many of them relate to the hours of work and the pay calculations.

They also relate to — this is somewhat related — but assignment of work. And again, there's a . . . Seniority plays a significant role in terms of assigning shifts to people, and we have a number of part-time staff that accumulate seniority as they work a shift. And so those things keep changing. And people are assigned to fill in different shifts, and there's a priority list that they have to go through. It's a very administrative process.

So sometimes at the centres, we make mistakes and assign people to the wrong sort of . . . Instead of assigning a person at the top of the list, we skip that person and go to the bottom of, not to the bottom of the list, but to the next person on the list. Or, you know, we attempt to call them by phone, and they're not available. And there's some certain rules around how many phone calls you have to put in before you can move to the next person, etc. So some very, very, very detailed work that requires, around assignment of shifts in those facilities. And so the majority of our grievances come from those areas.

Some of the hours of work have been outstanding for a number of years. It goes to some arguments or disagreements around how overtime is calculated when you're working on a statutory holiday, and that gets back to simple interpretation of the collective agreement, which is obviously beyond our authority at the departmental level.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — So I think it's clear then, Mr. Toth, that the bulk of our grievances are related to issues around, I guess you'd call them administrative issues, around the complexities that come with running institutions on a 24 hour a day, 7 days a

week scale, with complexities in terms of shift differentials, and often complex situations around hours of work.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, just a quick follow-up to what Mr. Lang had mentioned as well about some of the grievances that, yes they can be workplace related and who gets the shift and who didn't get the shift.

One of the questions that I would have, are there significant grievances in regards to seniority and maybe getting a move up the ladder or moving from . . . If I understand, in correctional centres there's different wings and different responsibilities dealing with different individuals, and at times people may not feel comfortable in working in one wing versus another wing, and a request may come in to be moved to a different wing where they feel it would be more appropriate for their abilities. Do you have many requests of that nature, and how are those dealt with?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — We do get some of those requests. They can't always be accommodated. We also have to make difficult decisions around assigning work. What I would say is that there's no question about the fact that there are grievances that are related to seniority and whether or not the most, you know, senior person necessarily gets the job. So yes, some grievances are related to that. I can't tell you how many today, but we can certainly check back through the list if you'd like us to and let you know that, Don.

Mr. Morgan: — We were concerned, Minister, about what appears to be a growing number of grievances. And I understand that, you know, some of them effectively die in the filing cabinet if both sides don't wish to pursue them. And so it's impossible really to say whether a grievance has been resolved or just let languish.

But I'm wondering on a statistical basis whether your officials could tell us the number of outstanding grievances at the end of about the last four fiscal years. And then I'm also concerned about issues within specific correctional centres. So I'm wondering if you could do that breakdown by correctional centre.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Morgan, it's clear to me that we don't have with us a breakdown by facility. Now that's something that we can certainly endeavour to provide you with. It's not something I have with me today.

Mr. Morgan: — . . . the information. We'd like to have it sooner, a breakdown by facility for about the last, say, four fiscal years. What we're looking for is an upward trend in any one of the institutions because we know what kind of issues the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] offices are hearing about, and we just sort of want to know whether there appears to be anomalies that are there.

We also had this morning the report released by the Ombudsman. And that report showed a fairly significant increase in recent times over complaints arising at the correctional centre. And I'm wondering whether those complaints are complaints from visitors to the institution, staff members, or inmates, or sort of if we can get . . . And then perhaps an indication whether we're dealing with one or two

institutions there or whether that's sort of across the province. Maybe the officials could comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — First of all, we'll undertake to get you the information that you're requesting with respect to the breakdown by institution.

And second, you're right about the fact that the number of, you know, cases involving Corrections and Public Safety have risen. I think all of us are operating at a slight disadvantage in the sense that the report's just been tabled today. And I haven't read it completely and I suspect many MLAs have not had the opportunity to read it completely.

I have had a chance to look at the part of the Ombudsman's report that deals specifically with Corrections and Public Safety and his comments on our response to his previous recommendations. Because of course, the Ombudsman filed the report in 2002 that was called *Locked out* and, at that time, he made 146 recommendations.

I think it's fair to say that in his report, he identifies that all but 10 of these have been acted on by the department. So that's, I think a . . . I think it's fair to say that he is relatively satisfied with the response of the Department of Corrections and Public Safety to his *Locked out* report. I want to be careful, you know; we should be careful to use his words. But I think he has some positive things to say about the response by the department to that report.

On the other hand there's, you know, there's the question about the . . . that you raise about the number of new cases. And this is something the Department of Corrections and Public Safety . . . I will give instructions to the department to examine the Ombudsman's recommendations in this regard with a good deal of care.

If you'll just excuse me for a minute, I want to consult with my assistant deputy minister.

Mr. Morgan, just some additional clarification. First of all, all the complaints that would come to the Ombudsman's office would come from offenders. So these would not be complaints coming from staff members.

And I can indicate that we are . . . Well let me just give you a record of the complaints over the last three or four years here. If you like, I can provide this information to you in writing as well. But the number of complaints remaining open for the 2004-2005 period are 35 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, that's right. And the number of complaints that have been resolved or closed in 2004-2005 is 28. The number of complaints that have been substantiated, 11; the number of complaints unsubstantiated, 49; and the number of complaints concluded or discontinued would be six.

I'm also going to invite Maureen Lloyd to make some additional comments on the nature of the complaints.

Ms. Lloyd: — I will just comment briefly on the nature of some increase in the complaints over the past year or two. And this won't account for all of the increase, but for some of it from the Ombudsman's point of view, that is the increase in remand

inmates in the correctional centres and that's, well, across the province and across the country. And they do find that they do get quite a few complaints from remand inmates. They're new to the centres. They have access to the Ombudsman's office, and they have quite a bit of time in order to call the Ombudsman's office. So they did comment that as remand numbers grow, so do the number of complaints from that segment of the population.

The other issue that we deal with in Saskatchewan is that our numbers are very high. And our remand population has grown, and so we do get a number of complaints relating to security levels. So an inmate who's in high security may be eligible to move to a lower security area of the institution, but due to numbers, we're not able to make that move happen as quickly as we'd like to make it move. And so they will phone and say, you know I should be going today, and they're telling me I won't be able to move until next week.

So we do have those situations. We try to resolve them as quickly as possible, but they're happening to us more frequently than we would like. So those would be two areas that, resulting from the high numbers in adult corrections, complaints will flow out of that.

Mr. Morgan: — At the news briefing this morning — I realize that the minister and the officials didn't have the chance to be there — one of the media asked the Ombudsman what type of issues they dealt with from the correctional facility.

And he used as an example, and he was using it as an example of things took a lot of time for not a lot of real productive value — and I'm not sure whether he was creating a hypothetical type of example or whether he was referring to something specific — but he said he would have a complaint from an inmate about a missing pair of running shoes. And he said it would take a fair amount of their time because all complaints have to be treated seriously and accepted at their face value. So by the time they go through the process and everything else, it may well have been resolved; the person may be gone. But that was the type of thing that was . . .

He was speaking about that in the terms of wanting to encourage the institutions to develop — and the various departments — better methods of internal dispute resolution between staff members or members of the public to try and resolve issues. A dispute resolution process would work prior to the person with the complaint going to the Ombudsman. It would be obviously more cost effective. And so I'm just wondering what steps are in place to try and accelerate that?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well first of all, I should just say that I think that the record of the department in the last three or four years in terms of responding to recommendations by the Ombudsman has been very good. And I think that's acknowledged in the Ombudsman's report that was filed today.

Secondly, this is a recommendation that deserves serious consideration, and my officials are meeting with the Ombudsman staff to discuss this issue. And we certainly want to take the recommendation that's been made by the Ombudsman on this matter very seriously and see if there are ways that we can move towards implementing it. But I want to

allow those discussions between my officials and officials in his office to continue for a while first before we, you know, indicate what precise direction we will take in terms of acting on this recommendation. But I always take the recommendations of the Ombudsman seriously, and will take this one seriously.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Lang had indicated that the complaints that had gone to the Ombudsman would all be . . . would not be complaints of staff members but would all be complaints from people that either were on remand or would be serving time. Would there be complaints in there as well from people that were guests to the institution, visitors as well? I'm wondering if there's statistics available on that as well.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — It's certainly possible that guests who were visiting the correctional institution could decide to contact the Ombudsman. That would be entirely appropriate.

Now for numbers, I can't give those to you right now, Mr. Morgan. I'll see if any of my staff have them. Otherwise we can again undertake to get those for you. We don't have a breakdown with respect to, you know, complaints that may have been made by guests. But we can look into that for you.

Mr. Morgan: — Okay. I don't think I have anything else right now.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Chair, and Mr. Minister. Moving on to another area in Corrections and Public Safety, and last week we discussed to a small degree the continuing crime rates in the province of Saskatchewan. And when we look at StatsCanada numbers, Saskatchewan continues to have some of the highest crime rates — Regina and Saskatoon considered crime capitals of the world.

Although driving into Regina this morning, I hear a report that the city of Regina is quite pleased. It seems that there was a substantial drop in at least break and enters in this first quarter of this year, and car thefts. And if that continues, we're certainly, I think, as ratepayers and taxpayers, certainly happy to hear of that decrease.

Having said that, however, the numbers overall are still quite dramatically high. And as we look at the budget before us, the question arises — in this budget, what is your department attempting to do or what does this budget do to address the consequences of rising crime? And does your government have a strategy to deal with an increase in the number of offenders now and in the long term?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well first of all, in this budget there are dollars for targeted crime reduction strategies in five communities. Those are for Regina, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Prince Albert, and Meadow Lake. And the nature of the crime reduction approach in each community varies somewhat. We're trying to give communities a chance to prioritize the areas of crime that they most want to focus on. So for instance, in Regina the focus for the last two or three years has been on reducing auto theft, whereas in Saskatoon the focus in the last few months has been on break and enter and reducing break and enter.

Now to report to you on the results. First of all, in the two big cities what we've seen so far in terms of the Saskatoon break and enter strategy — which is in its relatively early stages yet — is about a 12 per cent reduction in break and enters in Saskatoon. What we've seen in Regina from the auto theft strategy has been approximately a reduction of about a third in terms of auto theft relative to, say, 2002 numbers. And we're seeing some modest success in North Battleford as well. I think reduction rates there are kind of in the range of about 10 per cent for the areas that are being targeted.

Meadow Lake and Prince Albert, the crime reduction strategy's in its pretty early stages and so I don't have specific numbers to give you in terms of outcomes there.

But when I give you these reductions, it's around specific offences that have been targeted. So I don't want to leave the impression that crime in the community is down, in the case of Regina, by a third. It's just that auto thefts are down by a third.

You know, what we've tried to do in terms of the crime reduction strategies, and I'll just use Regina as an example, is we've tried to take a multi-faceted approach. First of all, the focus in the Regina crime reduction strategy around auto theft was quite heavily focused at first around young offenders; in other words, youth stealing cars — and particularly around chronic, repeat offenders. So youth who were repeatedly stealing cars.

In addition to custody time for these youth in young offender facilities, we've also, when youth have come out of facilities, the Department of Corrections and Public Safety has worked in partnership with city police in Regina to ensure that youth that are chronic offenders, for instance, have been subjected to intensive supervision. That often means nightly checks to ensure that they're home, that they're respecting their curfew times.

We've also worked with youth in terms of trying to encourage them to return to school or, if they've decided not to return to school, we've done pre-employment training with them and have tried to give them support in terms of moving into the workplace. And there's been some good success stories in terms of outcomes from that project.

So I think this approach of targeted crime reduction is certainly one strategy that is providing some positive results. I don't want to say that it's a solution in and of itself; it's not. But it certainly is demonstrating that this approach can work, and that each community makes their own decision. And this usually means the police, the local tribal councils, other community-based organizations, and obviously city councils make their own decisions about the area of crime that they want to particularly focus a reduction strategy on.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I would assume that your officials in your department are looking at or pursuing different ways and methods. And you just alluded to a few issues raised about how we address issues with young people before they ever get involved in criminal matters. And you may have seen the, I believe it was Monday night, CTV [Canadian Television Network Limited] had a bit on their program about young people and the problems that police face,

and partying and what have you.

And just walking in today, we see the number of young adults enjoying the lawns of the Legislative Assembly. And we know the nice weather . . . More than likely if we'd continued to have had what we had last year — that cold, damp, dreary weather — you might catch people indoors.

But what I noticed very interesting about the news item that was on and the ride-around and the fact that . . . And I forget what they specifically call the unit going out to deal with complaints about loud parties and disturbances. More times than not, it's just kids supposedly having a good time. However having a good time at 3 o'clock in the morning, especially when you're 14 years of age and under, you kind of begin to wonder what's exactly going on. And I guess my question has always been, where are the parents and how do we deal with these issues? And I'm not exactly sure that we always should be focusing . . . or the time of our police force should have to focus with dealing with young people who have been partying and then get carried away.

And I guess the question is, what initiatives is your department taking to address some of these concerns, and how do we get young people to begin to realize that they have responsibilities as well and not just . . . I believe parents have a responsibility, but somehow or other we must be . . . We're either lacking something when 14- and 16-year-olds are still carrying on at 3 o'clock in the morning. Hopefully young adults aren't doing that. But I'm afraid it goes to all kinds of ages, age groups who do carry on.

But what avenues is your department pursuing, whether it's working through the school system to really begin to enforce in young people's minds that there are rights and responsibilities that they have as well, and to try and help them look beyond and see the consequences if they . . . You know, it may be an innocent prank you pull, but that may lead to something further down the road that may involve criminal activity, and these are the consequences you may face. How do we address those issues up front?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, I mean, obviously there's much that both government and community can do on this front and that I think they are doing. And there's a lot more work to be done, as you say, Mr. Toth.

I mean, there's no question about the fact that this continues to be a difficulty in many of our communities, the issues that you raise. You know, we don't see custody in general terms. I mean, I'm not saying there couldn't be a specific incident that would lead to it, but I don't see custody for young people as a, you know, a solution to problems of young people partying and making noise at 3 o'clock in the morning.

That doesn't mean, though, that youth shouldn't be held responsible for their actions. And I think often we're able to divert, you know, a lot of these cases that do come to the attention of our department. We're able to divert them through the alternative measures program. And frankly I think that works very well for youth because they're still held accountable for their actions. And in some cases if they've done damage or something like that, they'll have to compensate property owners

whose property they've damaged, through a restitution program. But they're not necessarily formally sentenced, and they certainly don't end up . . . If they are formally sentenced, they don't end up in a custody facility because I think we both agree that — although I leave you to make your own comments on that — that custody is generally not the place for youth who get into this kind of trouble.

There is, I think, a lot that government does in terms of our investments outside of the department that are very key. You know, there's very significant investments, for instance, in Minister Beatty's department, in Culture and Youth, to support sport among young people. And I see that as a very, very important investment in our youth, and one that often helps to kind of get young people on a better track in terms of avoiding difficulty with the law. And we're expending many millions of dollars in supporting sporting activities in this province.

I've just used that as one example. I think there's a great deal of wonderful work that our school systems do at both the elementary and high school level in terms of, you know, building good citizens. Extracurricular activities for students, I mean, those things are all very, very key in terms of students getting onto a positive track.

Now I'm going to invite Bob Kary to just say a word about, to supplement my comments with respect to addressing the needs of youth on the issues that you've raised. One other comment before I turn things over to Mr. Kary, and that is that, you know, for the kind of circumstances that you're raising — which are a frustration I know for, you know, many residents of our communities — police cautioning under our current young offender legislation is important. In other words, the police have a role in terms of cautioning and warning youth.

And I'll ask Mr. Kary to expand on that as well and turn the microphone over to him for a moment to respond to your question, Don.

Mr. Kary: — Thank you. Bob Kary. The area that we're talking about here, the folks who are usually first in touch with any kind of pranking or disturbances that might occur in a community are usually the police. And police certainly have a great deal of discretion about how they deal with these matters.

They may . . . Sometimes, police deal with them directly for sure. And as Minister Prebble indicated, at times when police may have seen a young person more than once, that issues seem to be of a nature where they need to be held accountable in a little different kind of way, then certainly they do come into alternate measures programs where they — and I think we talked about that a little bit last time — where they, where they . . . there's a mediation process actually used to try and resolve any issues or come to an agreement around any kind of victimization or any kind of difficulties that young people may have created in the community.

And certainly, going back to the use of police discretion, one of the things police do do is to have access to and understanding of a lot of other community resources that they use. For example, sometimes emergency services, sometimes trying to get in touch with parents; you know, making parents aware, bringing kids back to parents, those types of things. If there are, you

know, housing or supervision issues, addressing them through similar kinds of ways as well.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I guess just as a follow-up and maybe I wasn't as clear when I placed my question, but I realize as the department, you're basically dealing with individuals after they've committed a criminal activity. And they end up falling at your doorstep and then you have to deal with them and kind of help them move beyond that.

However, I would like to know does your department — say, with the Department of Learning — help develop initiatives that may be presented in schools, that may give young people and children a better idea of how to treat people; with respect and act responsibly . . . responsibly I should say, so that they do not enter or do not, they actually do not cross your path.

And that's kind of the question I, or the way I'd like to see as, I'm directing my question is, what are you doing maybe ahead of the game in, based on what you've seen in the past and the types of criminal activity? Are there initiatives that you can promote through the Department of Learning to deal with children and present ulterior goals for young people so they do not fall into, or as your department you really don't have to deal with them on the other side of the ledger?

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — We are active partners in a lot of work around School^{PLUS}. And those partnerships, I mean part of it of course, part of that work is focused on helping to ensure that when youth leave custody facilities, they are very strongly encouraged to return to school — and if they're under 16, there's an obligation of course for them to return to school — and then working with them to try to ensure that they'll be successful in school and preparing them for that transition before they leave a custody facility.

But to speak directly to what you're raising, there's also an element of our partnership with Learning that has the dimensions that you're talking about, where we're working with Learning in terms of developing programming that's delivered through School^{PLUS} that's geared, that is primarily of a preventive nature. So while we're not the lead players in that front — that kind of falls more to the Department of Learning — we're certainly actively involved as a partner in program planning.

Mr. Morgan: — We've over the years had various meetings with Health individuals, Education individuals, and it's abundantly clear that the sooner we deal with the problems of young people, whether it's at a kindergarten level or a pre-K [kindergarten] level, the less chance they are likely to become issues for the legal system later on — that an investment made in a young child is far better than dealing with an adult later on. And I think it would behoove your department to try and encourage Community Resources and other departments to ensure that appropriate resources are committed and targeted.

We know that in Saskatoon there is approximately 1,000 children that are not enrolled in school, but we know that they exist from a variety of other methods — Social Services statistics, birth information — and that number has existed and there's been a number of conferences, seminars. Those children

are at very high risk of coming into contact with the judicial system. And what I have been told over the years is what is needed is a true intersectoral approach from all of the agencies that are affected, which would be health, education, justice, and education. And I find it troubling to hear people talk in terms of forming partnerships, when what is needed is either a superministry that would deal with it or something so that we don't have these territorial issues. And we shouldn't even now be dealing with statistical issues of how we find or how we identify these children. We're paying every month to a parent for these children. It's not acceptable to have 1,000 children . . .

So I'm wondering what your department is doing to deal with that issue, and secondly what you're doing to deal with earlier intervention methods.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, that's a very important question, Mr. Morgan. And this is an issue that I have a good deal of personal interest in. Prior to being elected in this legislature in 1999, I was involved in work with Saskatoon Communities for Children, and we focused in on this question of children not in school in quite a major way. We also focused in, of course, on the whole issue of child sexual exploitation, which has since been dealt with by this legislature as well. And Mr. Toth and I both served on a legislative committee focused on that issue.

There's no question about the fact that children who are not in school are obviously at greater risk of being in contact with the criminal justice system and committing an offence. They're also at much greater risk of not being able to successfully integrate into society in general, and a greater risk of being unemployed. So the whole kids in school, not in school issue is a huge issue, and one that really deserves the attention of all legislators in the province. It has been getting attention from our government in a, I think in quite a serious way on a number of fronts.

First of all we've set up, with the assistance of the Department of Health, we've set up a tracking system that is just getting implemented now and I think will be very helpful to government, in terms of working with families whose children are not attending school. The tracking system will identify if a child, for instance, has left one school and moved to another but in fact is not attending that other school. The tracking system will pick that up. So that's very important.

In terms of our own department, we are, I think, doing a lot more in the last two years to try to ensure that when children leave custody, we do our level best to ensure that they will stay in school.

So there's a much closer relationship now between staff in our young offender facilities and teachers in the school system and principals and vice-principals in the school system . . . try to help ensure a successful transition of a child leaving custody, returning to the school system — as long as it's safe for the school to have them there. So a lot of work has been done in this regard, and I think we're seeing more young people who were in our custody facilities staying in school as a result of that work.

Our government agrees with the point that you are making with respect to early intervention. You know, that's why we've made

very significant investments in pre-kindergarten. I think we have some 80 pre-kindergartens operating in the province right now.

We've enhanced the community school system in this province in a very, very major way over the last six or seven years. We've brought in line a lot of additional community schools. And that's a very, very important social investment in our communities and in our elementary school aged children. And we've also . . . Through those community school programs, we've helped ensure that children have more support in terms of literacy.

We've got the KidsFirst program which you'll be familiar with, and there's over 800 families in the province that have been helped with that. And, you know, this is again quite groundbreaking, I think, in terms of work in Canada. And high-risk families are identified when children are born, and they are offered support in the home to improve their parenting skills and to address a variety of issues that they might be facing and helped to access important resources in the community that will be key to that family being successful in the long term.

So I think these are all things that our government's doing that I'm very proud of. But, there's a lot more work to do. And as you identified quite correctly, there is, despite all these efforts, there's still a very real problem in our community both in Saskatoon and in Regina, of having a significant number of children who are of school age but who are not attending school regularly.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, I appreciate your comments. I'm troubled by the fact that this goes on, and we continue to hear that there is a plan under way or something under way. Just so that you are aware and your department is aware, that is something that we plan to aggressively pursue over the next number of months. And we want to urge the various departments that are involved in that process to try and get that under way, because we find it completely unacceptable to do . . .

We also appreciate the hard work that our various police forces . . . have been done. And I think the success in dealing with property crimes, vehicle crimes in Regina and somewhat in Saskatoon shows that by targeting resources you can make a difference.

Our statistics in this province are grossly . . . or are highly disproportionate. And the most recent figures we have are 2003 Criminal Code offences — and this is per 100,000 population — in Canada is 8,132; Quebec, 6,406; Manitoba, 12,474; Saskatchewan, 15,375. So we are not quite double the national average.

Now this is not just dealing with young offenders. This is in general. We also have some of the highest levels of violent crimes, and there the figures are even worse and even more horrific. The notion of calling Saskatchewan the murder capital is unfortunately an accurate statement. Crimes of violence on a Canadian or Canada-wide basis, 962 per 100,000 population; Quebec, 712; Manitoba, 1,625; and Saskatchewan, 2,057. So on crimes of violence, we are double the national average.

Homicides, national average, 1.7; Manitoba, 2.1 . . . Or rather, I'm sorry, 1.7, Canada wide; Manitoba, 3.7; Saskatchewan, 4.1. And unfortunately the things continue, whether it's dealing with sexual assaults, assaults, other sexual offences, robbery, other crimes of violence.

So it is our hope and expectation that resources will be targeted, and that we will find and develop programs, that we can find accurate ways to measure the impact that the programs are having. I don't think it's enough just to pour money on the programs. We have to find ways of monitoring the success of those programs.

I'd welcome your comments on those statistics.

And then, the final comment that I want to make, or question that I have for your officials while they're here, is we know that the youth justice system does not kick in until age 12. I've had the opportunity to go on ride-alongs and I've seen young people — 9, 10, and 11 years old — literally thumb their nose and express their contempt of the police in language that we cannot repeat here, and because they know full well that the justice system cannot deal with them until age 12. And I think this goes back to the issue of an intersectoral approach. I'm wondering whether Community Resources can or will deal with those programs, and whether we can develop some form of legislation that would provide a tool for the police officers to deal with offenders that are under age 12. And I've gone on for a fair while and raised two issues, so I'll welcome . . .

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you for raising those issues. And I share your concern about the crime statistics, I mean, both with respect to the issue of children not in school and with respect to the issue of crime. First of all obviously, the province has a very important leadership role to play. Secondly, these are both community responsibilities as well.

In other words, you know, the issue of children not in school is an issue that concerns everybody in the province. And it's not just an issue for our school boards; it's not just an issue for the province. It's an issue for our community and all community organizations. But that having been said, obviously people expect the province and our school divisions to play a major leadership role. And we're doing our best to do that.

And the same applies to the issue, you know, of crime. I mean this is not just the government's fault and it's not just the government's problem. It's also a challenge for our municipalities and for many community groups. But people certainly have every right to expect that the province will play an important leadership role. And you know . . . And we're doing our best. And the targeted crime reduction strategies are one example of that. But you are absolutely right in targeting the fact that we have a significant issue with crime in our province, and it's one that as Minister of Corrections and Public Safety, it concerns me greatly.

With respect to the point you make about children under the age of 12, I think this is also an important issue that you raise. It's been recognized for instance in the North Battleford crime reduction strategy, where an element of the strategy is focused specifically on dealing with children under 12 years of age. And I'll ask Mr. Kary to comment on that in more detail, and to

comment on your broader question about what we do with youth under the age of 12, in a way that might supplement my comments too.

Mr. Kary: — Thank you. Specifically with, firstly with respect to the North Battleford crime reduction strategy, the partnership there goes beyond police and prosecutions and Corrections and Public Safety to include the Department of Community Resources and Employment and having a program that brings into, for skills development and training, younger kids who are before . . . you know, are committing or are being involved in incidents in the community that puts them at great concern and great risk for further kinds of difficulties.

And so certainly that kind of programming is part of what can happen in crime reduction strategies and things. And where communities identify that, certainly that's what is happening.

With respect to the broader issue of what are we doing with young people under the age of 12, of course one of the things we do know from the work, our work in Corrections and Public Safety is that there . . . the research tells us about what factors in young people's lives put them at risk to commit criminal offences, if those issues exist.

And that is why we are, you know, active with other departments in strategies such as School^{PLUS}; such as strategies that try to deal with young people with cognitive disabilities; such as doing work right now with other departments on issues with respect to the North and young people in the North, to bring that perspective into . . . And also to ensure that that research and those issues comes to play around developing programming that is earlier, more preventative, and addresses some of those issues in a supported kind of way before a young person is of an age to commit offences or is committing offences.

Mr. Morgan: — Madam Chair, we certainly have more questioning and could probably go on all day, but we likely have Justice officials waiting. If it's the pleasure of the Chair to . . .

The Chair: — Well if there are no further questions, I'll thank the minister and his officials, and entertain a motion that the committee adjourn its consideration of the estimates of the Department of Corrections and Public Safety. Mr. Toth? Thank you. So thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I want to thank Mr. Morgan and Mr. Toth for their questions. And I want to thank the committee for their interest, and we look forward to appearing before you again. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**General Revenue Fund
Justice
Vote 3**

Subvote (JU01)

The Chair: — I recognize the minister, the Hon. Mr. Quennell, and invite him to introduce his officials. And if you have anything to add to your previous opening statement, you can

certainly do so now.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Madam Chair. With me again today is Doug Moen, Q.C. [Queen's Counsel], who is the deputy minister of Justice and Deputy Attorney General. And to his right, Elizabeth Smith, executive assistant to the deputy minister of Justice.

As well, behind me are Jan Turner, executive director, community justice division; Rod Crook, assistant deputy minister, courts and civil justice; Murray Brown, executive director, public prosecutions; Gerald Tegart, executive director, civil law division; Susan Amrud, executive director, public law division; Gord Sisson, director, administrative services; Suzanne Bugeaud, assistant director, family justice services; Murray Sawatsky, executive director, law enforcement services; Dave Gullickson, senior policy analyst, policy, planning and evaluation; Don McKillop, Crown solicitor, civil law; Karen Pflanzner, Crown counsel; and Rick Mulrooney, director of program and finance services and law enforcement services.

I don't have any additions to my opening statement. I'm ready for questions.

The Chair: — Thank you. And before we entertain questions, I'll again ask the officials if they speak at the mike for the first time to identify themselves. And open the floor to questions. Mr. Morgan.

Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to start by apologizing to the minister and his officials for having to cut short our meeting last week. I'm well aware of the work that the department officials put in. They spent a significant amount of time waiting, and I wanted them to know it was unavoidable. And I certainly want to apologize to the minister and to them for that inconvenience, and thank them for coming back.

I would like to get back to the issue of the number of police officers that we were dealing with. And I had been asking questions. And I believe the minister was going to provide some information as to the total number of police officers that are paid for by the province in each of the years from 1999 forward, and the number of vacancies in each of those. And I'm wondering whether that information is available today?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Madam Chair, I did provide information when last we met and I'm certainly willing to provide that information again, but it's now a matter of the record. A written response is being prepared. It's not quite ready yet, but will be provided to the committee.

But in the meantime, I can provide some further detail. And in particular, Mr. Morgan had requested information as to how many officers there were in 1999 and working forward. And I can provide some information on that, and I will do so now, Madam Chair. In 1999, the average utilization of funded positions by the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] was 755. In 2001, the Department of Justice converted 6 RCMP positions from provost detail — that's prisoner transport to and from court.

A Member: — In what year?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — In 2001. To regular policing duties, an increase of 6 positions — that is 6 policing positions.

A Member: — And what would the total number be for that year?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well if I could finish my answer. The RCMP are projecting that they will utilize 858 positions in 2005-2006. With the changes in duties made in 2001 and this increase, there's an average of 109 more RCMP members working in our communities. That's an increase of 109 RCMP officers over 1999.

This is an average number. Retirements, interdivisional transfers, and promotions to other divisions, coupled with the wait for cadets to complete training, result in an annual utilization rate that is lower than the number of positions funded.

Since 1999, we have provided funding for 119 RCMP positions and increased total funding to the RCMP by approximately \$28 million. In 2004-2005 we created the safer communities investigation unit. There will be six investigators in 2005-2006. In 1999 we funded 13 municipal policing positions, funding we had begun, or the Department of Justice had begun in 1998. In 2005-2006, there will be a total of 57 officers in positions funded by the province, an increase of 44 if we do not count the 1998 positions.

Since 1999, we've increased provincial funding for police services by more than \$32 million, funding that paid for salary and operating increases, as well as putting more officers in our communities. So the utilization of police positions funded by Saskatchewan Justice, in 1999-2000 there were, as I said, 755 Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In 2005-2006 that number is 858, for a difference of 103.

Municipal police service positions funded by the province. In 1999 there were 13; 2005-2006 there are 57, for a difference of 44.

The conversion of RCMP officers from transporting prisoners to actual policing jobs. Six, that was in 2001-2002, for six officers. And a safer communities investigation unit as of 2005-2006, six. One hundred and three, 44, 6, and 6 are 159 is the total.

The annual utilization figure is affected by retirements, inter-divisional transfers and promotions to other divisions, coupled with the wait for cadets to complete training. For example, in 2003 the utilization figure varied from 825 to 847. And as I said on the previous day, funding for the RCMP is complex because although additional funding is provided, the RCMP have the flexibility, need the flexibility to spend it on capital, cars, radios, whatever. The funding with municipal police officers is far more straightforward. The funding provided for municipal officers goes to officers on the street.

In the first four months of fiscal 2003-2004 — that's April to July — 23 members retired. There were nine inter-divisional transfers, and two members have been appointed to other divisions. In that same time period, the RCMP had only received 20 of 91 recruits expected for the year. And again this

shows the complexity of calculating the funding based upon staffing by the RCMP in the province.

According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics report, *Police Resources In Canada, 2004*, Saskatchewan had the most police officers per 100,000 population for the fourth year in a row, at 202 officers per 100,000 population, or 1 police officer for every 495 residents in the province. The report also shows that between 1994 and 2004, while the number of police officers per 100,000 population declined by nearly 3 per cent nationally, the Saskatchewan rate increased by 7.5 per cent. And of course a fair amount of that increase would be because of increased funding by the province of police officers.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, you'd indicated that some of these were transfers, and I'm not sure what you mean by some of these transfers. When you say you've transferred somebody from, say, transporting inmates, how do the inmates get transported if you've transferred an officer from them? Would you transfer somebody else to do that, or is that done by private sector workers or . . .

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — That's right. And I think we're still in the process of doing this as resources become available, having departmental staff in court services transport prisoners as their job, and freeing up police officers to do other police work and no longer have those duties of transporting officers.

Mr. Morgan: — You're providing us with some additional written material for a year by year analysis, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — We are providing a written response to the question that was asked when last we met.

Mr. Morgan: — You had given an answer as to what the municipal, what was . . . [inaudible] . . . So if you could do that for each of the years back to 1999, that would be beneficial.

The municipal police officers that are paid for by the province, is that with a written arrangement with the municipalities in which they work? Or how do those officers come about, and how does the chain of command for those officers work?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — The contract is with the police service, not with the municipality as such.

Mr. Morgan: — It is with the police service directly?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — So the officers provided to the Saskatoon Police Service, and there were two additional officers for the Saskatoon Police Service in this last budget, that's a contract between the Justice department and the police service.

Mr. Morgan: — And how many officers in total are provided in Saskatoon that are paid for by the province?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — With the addition of the two this year, twenty-one.

Mr. Morgan: — And are those specific officers or you just provide funding directly to the city of Saskatoon Police Service for that many? Like I'm asking, are they employees of the

province or employees of the city of Saskatoon Police Service?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — They are employees of the police service.

Mr. Morgan: — And what control . . . Is this under a written agreement?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — They are identifiable members. We could point to a police officer who's part of a serious habitual offender program or part of the break and enter strategy in Saskatoon who is funded by the province. But that's by agreement with the police service of the municipality — Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, whatever.

Mr. Morgan: — Is there a memorandum of agreement or something in place that creates that relationship? And I guess I'm wondering as well, what happens if the province cuts funding? Are those individuals laid off? Do they have collective rights? And are they accountable to the province because they're part of a provincial program . . . [inaudible] . . . I want to know more about the program.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well they are employees of the police service, so they would be members of the association. Because they are like other police officers who work for the city of Saskatoon or the city of Regina or city of Prince Albert, they belong to the same chain of command.

Ultimately the chief of police is responsible for their activities. If they were to be disciplined, they would be disciplined the same way that the police officers who are funded by the municipality. There's no difference as to their accountability or control. It's just that the funding comes from the province as, that's part of the commitment of the Government of Saskatchewan to fund, ultimately, 200 police officers.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, I'd like to deal a little bit with the provincial crime statistics, and wanting to know how your department is going to address some of the crime issues in our province.

The nearest year that we have complete figures from Statistics Canada is 2003, but I'm presuming that the statistics are . . . [inaudible] . . . They are all based on a per 100,000 population. And Canada-wide — and I'm just dealing with Criminal Code offences — is 8,132 per 100,000 population; Manitoba, 12,474 per 100,000; and Saskatchewan, 15,375. And it's far worse when you deal with crimes of violence. Canada-wide stat — 962.8 per 100,000; Ontario, 784; Manitoba, 1,625; Saskatchewan, 2,057. So on violent crimes we are more than double the national average and about a third more than Manitoba. And we unfortunately wear the crown of murder capital of Canada. Homicides per 100,000 — 1.7 per 100,000; Ontario, 1.5; Manitoba, 3.7; and Saskatchewan, 4.1.

Now we're aware that we've seen our local police forces — and I give them a great deal of credit for targeting some specific property crimes: break and enters and vehicle thefts — but I'm wondering what your department is doing to try and address some of the violent crimes that we have.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I can update slightly on the statistics,

or at least I can for some areas. I can update a little bit on the statistics in Saskatoon. And you were giving statistics for 2003, and I expect we'll have the 2004 report this summer, probably July. I believe that's when we usually get it.

But in the meantime there is progress being made. I have the month end summer report for the Saskatoon Police Service; this is the month end of December 2004. And the year-to-date decrease in crimes against the person in Saskatoon was almost 11 per cent. The year-to-date decrease in crimes against property in Saskatoon was slightly over 11 per cent.

For the Regina Police Service for the same month, December 2004, there is significant progress in some areas. Arsons had gone up, but there was progress across the way. And I have Regina, I think, Regina statistics for March 2005, which brings us fairly close to the present circumstance.

I had mentioned in response to a question in the House about policing and crime that in Saskatoon — where we now had the break and enter strategy which was led by and participated in by the Department of Justice — in Saskatoon we've had a decrease in break and enters. And the year-to-date total change for total break and enters in Saskatoon, prepared April 11, 2005 but it's March 2005 statistics, a decline of 26.9 per cent. Total crimes against the property decreased 21.6 per cent. Thefts of motor vehicles were down almost 28 per cent.

So we're receiving from both Regina and Saskatoon — which have had high crime rates typically, and I think those where the 2003 statistics show — we're receiving from both those cities, the police services from both those cities, very encouraging changes and very encouraging results, I would suggest. The Department of Justice led a partnership, including the Regina Police Service, to reduce auto thefts, and that strategy has been in place for some time now. And there has been an ongoing decrease in auto thefts in the city of Regina since the implementation of that strategy.

A similar strategy was implemented in Saskatoon in the last year, and at my suggestion the group working on it decided to focus on break and enters in the first instance, and we have seen a decrease in Saskatoon. And I think it shows the value, not only of adding police resources — because our adding of police resources has been gradual over time — but it shows the value of a concentrated, focused strategy and a partnership.

And the partnerships in both these cases — and initiatives we're taking in North Battleford and Prince Albert, that we hope to be taking in Meadow Lake this year — these partnerships include the Department of Justice, the Department of Corrections and Public Safety in relation to young offenders, the local police service, and citizen groups including, in some cases, tribal councils. And these groups working together have shown that when you address this in a concerted, concentrated, focused partnership way, you can have good results. And I think we're seeing some of those results, particularly around partnership crime.

In response to the question, I again want to highlight the initiative around safer communities and neighbourhoods, which is not seeing a full year of implementation yet and I don't think, as yet, reflected in the statistics, crime statistics. But I think will

positively affect issues of crime in inner city neighbourhoods and throughout Saskatchewan and we're seeing positive results already. And certainly, my office receives, directly from citizens, expressions of appreciation where we have made a difference in their neighbourhood using that initiative.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, the reason I used interprovincial statistics was — and I'm pleased and very supportive of the efforts that have been made by our police departments in reducing, in reducing crime — but I think the appropriate measure of our success is not just a plus or minus.

I remember back in the days SaskTel telling me how much money I would save on my long distance bill, it be so many percentage less. Well that was because they were charging me too much before and the percentage less didn't help.

And the fact is, our crime was too high before and, seeing it come down, it's still way too high. We have to make a comparison with other provinces and with other jurisdictions within Canada to see whether we're . . . whether we've . . . [inaudible] . . . should be our targets. I appreciate, Minister, your comments on this.

But so that you're aware, our comparisons — as we go forward — will not just be as to what the crime was when it was really bad. Our comparisons will be with what it is in the rest of Canada and, probably elsewhere, where we think it should be.

Your comments about targeting are well taken and it is our expectation as well, Minister, that you will continue to increase funding and provide the police officers as requested. The commitment in year 1999 was for 200. We've heard a variety of different figures from yourself and from others and it's abundantly clear we have not yet met the 200. But I think it should be clear to you that as you increase the number of officers and we get more front line officers on the street, that's when we start to see a reduction.

My next question, Minister, deals with the issue, you talk about partnerships with Department of Justice and with the municipal police forces. I suspect that you're likely aware of the statistic that's thrown around in Saskatoon. There are roughly 1,000 school-age children that are living in Saskatoon that we know of their existence, but are not enrolled in school, and these children are obviously the ones that are coming into contact with the judicial system.

And I'm wondering what your department is doing to try and deal with children not in school, and what partnering you're doing with other government agencies. In particular, we're looking for a strong intersectoral program between your department, Health, Education, and Corrections, and policing, as well as schools and municipalities. And I guess I'm wanting to know specifically what you plan to do.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — In respect to students not in school, this is one of the issues that was raised by the report of the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform, which is a wide-ranging report, a valuable report to government, and not only to government but to First Nations and Métis people organizations as well. And when I say wide-ranging, it addressed issues outside the formal justice

system, including issues around Learning.

And certainly one of the issues that was raised was children outside of school. Now I'm not the best person to address this question to — you might want to address them to the Minister of Learning in estimates — but one of the recommendations across government, who we'll be responding to, is implementing a student tracking system so that we're aware of when students leave school and when they don't enter a school somewhere else.

The issue of the students not in school is partly an information problem because, of course, families move around. And families who don't have an attachment to a neighbourhood, don't have an attachment to a school, families that don't own homes, they are often the most transient of the families. And a school knows when a student is no longer there. A school doesn't know that the student hasn't enrolled somewhere else.

And we are, within the limits provided or permitted by the protection of people's privacy, working as a government on student tracking so that that part of the puzzle is addressed, as recommended by the Justice Reform Commission. A full report on our responses to the recommendations of the Justice Reform Commission should be presented to the legislature and to the public before the end of May, so certainly during this sitting of the House.

Mr. Morgan: — Minister, what I find troubling about this is this has been a problem that's been there for years. It's my hope and expectation — and you should be put on notice now — that we will be asking questions about this through the upcoming year, that nothing has happened to deal with this so far. We know it's going to be dealt with elsewhere.

The bottom line for this — and what I think the taxpayers of this province find offensive — is that we have a tracking system that seems to work really well to get monthly cheques out to parents of these children, and we're able to give them money for their day-to-day living needs. And obviously they have those needs, and I'm not suggesting in any way that we don't. But if we're able to get money to them on a month-to-month basis, we should at least be able to find out what those children are doing, and if they're not in school, why they're not in school. And the Department of Community Resources and Employment should obviously be dealing with that. As I indicated before, that is an intersectoral approach. And we're looking to your department as being part of the solution to that.

I don't really wish to make more comments other than that. It wasn't so much a question as a comment.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well yes, I wouldn't term it a question either. No, I don't . . .

Mr. Morgan: — Moving on, Mr. Minister, we note that there is an increase in full-time equivalents of about 35 new positions. Can you give us the breakdown of these positions?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Eleven of the 35 positions dealt with security detention workload pressures, that's the people who transport prisoners. There were seven and a half full-time positions added to new programs. The committee may be aware

of the new access and privacy branch within government, well, that's within the Department of Justice, and that's to assist government in a consistent and appropriate way dealing with issues, access and privacy information.

Mr. Morgan: — Excuse me, how many issues were dealing with privacy?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — That's three positions.

We are now providing for the investigation of financial abuse — that's abuse of bond . . . [inaudible] . . . by the Public Guardian and Trustee, there's three positions have been provided to that new program. And we're providing legal services to the new Department of Saskatchewan Property Management of 1.5 positions.

Nine point three full-time positions respond directly to initiatives arising from response to the recommendations of the Justice Reform Commission, of which we have previously spoke; 3.5 of those positions are safer communities and neighbourhoods positions.

In police complaints there will be two increased full-time positions. We're expanding the police complaint investigation process and the board there.

There is an increase to the coroner's budget, approximately 30 per cent, I think, in the last budget. That's a result of the review requested or suggested by Commissioner Wright, arising out of the Stonechild inquiry. That's two additional full-time positions this year. To court services, another position; to prosecutions, point eight of a position.

And then there are some miscellaneous adjustments: contract conversions and prosecutions, two positions; the Human Rights Commission, 2.5 positions. I expect Mr. Morgan would support both of those. Additional support for the Automobile Injury Appeal Commission, one position. And to family justice services, one and a half positions.

So the 35 positions are spread out over those new programs and initiatives for the most part.

Mr. Morgan: — Is there any additional staffing for maintenance enforcement?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — No, I don't think there's any new full-time employments.

Mr. Morgan: — There is not?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — No.

Mr. Morgan: — Okay. What kind of statistics are kept with regard to the effectiveness of maintenance enforcement as to how long claims take to be processed and the number of dollars recovered?

Ms. Bugeaud: — My name is Suzanne Bugeaud. I'm the assistant director at family justice services branch and maintenance enforcement office.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I'm assuming what the . . . I'm assuming, making assumptions about the question because you asked about what kind of statistics are kept, and I might have just said, good statistics. But if you're talking about . . .

Mr. Morgan: — . . . we'll be looking for a copy of them. What I guess I'm looking for is a summary of the kind of statistics that are kept, like the number of files, the success rate, or how long it takes. We know that maintenance obligations are something that . . . It's clearly the intention of the government and of the opposition to ensure that there is the most effective method of maintenance that we can possibly have. And our MLA offices receive queries about issues with maintenance enforcement. And so I'm just wondering if we can get some background that will assist us in dealing with those issues.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — This is the figure that I think I've perhaps used here before. The office has a high collection rate — about an 80 per cent collection rate. I believe it's, if not the best or second-best in the country, certainly one of the best in the country. It can be . . . take about three months from when a complaint or a claim comes into the office to when money is collected in the case where the person, the debtor I guess, lives within the province of Saskatchewan.

But we can certainly provide you with some statistical information if you want some.

Mr. Morgan: — What other kind of information is kept and what's tracked?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I can provide not only what kind of information is kept but perhaps some of the numbers. The maintenance enforcement program collects over \$2.3 million per month for custodial parents, and these being mainly women and for children in Saskatchewan. Since November 1996, maintenance enforcement has issued 6,316 warning letters, 4,468 final notice letters. The maintenance enforcement office has suspended 3,272 drivers' licences for non-payers, mainly self-employed people. The driver's licence withholding program has been quite successful.

The maintenance enforcement office receives approximately 40 new applications per week. The total number of active files as of March 31, 1996, were 8,249. The total number of active files as of March 31, 2004, was 9,878. Payments processed from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004 were \$29.5 million. Payments processed from April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005 was \$30.7 million, so you can see the increase over time.

And again, the maintenance enforcement office is, at any given time, either the best or the second best in the country at collecting these payments, custodial payments, for custodial parents and for their children.

Mr. Morgan: — In asking my questions, I certainly didn't mean to be critical of the successes of that agency. I'm highly supportive of the work that they've done, and I just sort of want to know a bit of background on that. And I'm certainly . . . By asking the questions, I don't want the officials to think that we're saying that they're not doing an adequate job.

Actually, three more questions. I'm wanting to know whether

they feel — and maybe it's not a fair question but I'll ask it anyway — whether they feel if they had more resources, whether that would significantly increase their collection rate.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well I think I'll take that question because . . .

Mr. Morgan: — In theory, whether we're getting to the point of diminishing returns as far as committing resources to that.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well I'll take that question because I think it's a political question. I noted that, when I could point to declining crime rates and the success of all the partners in crime reduction in the province of Saskatchewan, instead of celebrating our success and our ability to address a challenging problem and turn the trend the other way — and hopefully that is going to continue to be the case — it was suggested that we should really be looking not at our successes, but still at comparison with other provinces. With that in mind, I think it's fair to compare the work of the maintenance enforcement office with the work of other provinces and then note that, in this case, we are a leader.

Mr. Morgan: — I'm pleased that we are. And my question still stands: would, if there was more resources, would it be effective? My next question, so you can understand where I'm going from, is: what percentage of the monies that are collected are effectively clawed back through CRE [Community Resources and Employment] payments?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Maintenance enforcement is actually one of the largest sources of revenue for the Department of Community Resources and Employment, and last year that revenue was almost \$800,000.

Mr. Morgan: — We're in a position where we statistically track that, or is the information shared between maintenance enforcement and the CRE workers directly?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Yes.

Mr. Morgan: — The out-of-province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Go ahead. I'm wondering about out-of-province collections. We participated in the reciprocal enforcement program, and I'm wondering how many dollars are collected for Saskatchewan residents from out of province and how many dollars we collect for out of province, for our residents.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Okay we can't give the breakdown today. But I believe we can provide that breakdown, so we will.

Mr. Morgan: — I guess I'm wanting to know that Saskatchewan residents are getting a fair shake when we send them out. And then I don't know whether it's fair to ask the officials to comment on whether there's disparity between other provinces, from one province to another, as to the effectiveness on how they collect — whether some are better than others, and whether we're getting a fair shake as we go across the provinces.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — If Saskatchewan is one of the most effective provinces at collecting these payments that are owed

. . . And I expect that other jurisdictions aren't necessarily as efficient at it, and I don't think that would be any deliberate policy on the part of their governments, if they were less effective in collecting what was owed to Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Morgan: — You had indicated, Minister, that you had . . . there was a large number of drivers' licences that were not renewed. Is this affecting vehicle registration, or is the registration system just dealing with drivers' licences? They could continue to own a vehicle?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — It's just drivers' licences.

Mr. Morgan: — Maintain a PIC [personal identification code] number and still can . . . Is there any method of monitoring to determine whether those people are driving without licences? Is that information circulated to police forces?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Well if someone . . . You mean other than somebody being stopped and not being able to produce a licence?

Mr. Morgan: — Yes, whether there's a list prepared by maintenance enforcement or through the department that would be given to police officers as a list of suspended operators.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — No, that information's not shared. That information's not shared with the police, and I'm not sure of the value of doing that.

Mr. Morgan: — I'm just asking the question.

There's a budget item dealing with the computer system, some . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Mr. Toth: — Madam Chair, I'd like to do a follow-up on maintenance, and I'm going to go just a little different direction. I appreciate the work and effort that's been done by the department in maintenance enforcement, as to collecting fees and following up on judgments.

But I do have a question in regards to when the department, when a complaint comes in about the lack of a person honoring their commitments to maintain the resources or the fees that have been awarded by the court, and yet at the same time we seem to be very good at enforcing the fees part. But on the other hand — and in most cases it's the dads — the court also awards the dads the right to have the ability to see their children and meet with their children and have their children in their possession. I shouldn't use the word in their possession, but at least be able to see their children on specific periods of time.

And there's been issues that I've had to deal with where the dads have been harassed and harassed, but never have had the ability to see their children. In one case, one gentleman never saw his child — actually hasn't seen his child for the last 18 years — and yet it didn't matter where he went, maintenance was on his back.

And I would like to know, exactly how are fathers specifically supposed to deal with these issues, when the court has given an order that says the father has equal opportunity to spend some

time with their child. And the situations I've dealt with, the father has not refused to, but comes to a point of refusing to pay maintenance because there's no effort made to ensure that the father has the same opportunity to visit their offspring.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — If someone's not . . . a custodial parent is not following a court order concerning access, the non-custodial parent's recourse is to the court. The support of the children, the ability of the custodial parent to feed and clothe the child cannot be linked to whether they are complying on access. Those have to be separate issues. And the maintenance enforcement office cannot be expected to give a discount to a parent who owes maintenance for the support of a child based on the custodial parent's compliance with an access order. That would be inappropriate in my view.

The Chair: — Being as it's 5 o'clock, the committee will now adjourn.

[The committee adjourned at 17:01.]